



Launch a House Party Program to Raise Funds & Recruit Volunteers for Your Organization

- 1) The most successful parties start with an action plan.** This does not need to be complex or time-consuming—tailor your plan to fit your goals and the resources you have available. But recognize that simply putting a link up on your web site is rarely enough to organize a successful party. You need to recruit, motivate, and train hosts.
- 2) Set your goals.** The best party programs build geometrically, over time—as people attend parties and see how much fun they are and how easy it is to host one, they sign up for future events. So, set a modest goal for your first group of parties and have your next date ready to announce come party time. If planning fundraising house parties, plan to set a minimum goal for party hosts. (But keep it reasonable—better for people to exceed their goal on the first party and feel like a winner!)
- 3) Map out your party calendar.** Start with the sample calendar included here. It is optimized for groups that are planning a Theme Party Day for simultaneous parties on one day, but you can adapt it for the launch of your party program.
- 4) Make it easy for hosts to sign up and manage their party.** You'll need a web site where hosts can sign up, send invitations, and manage RSVPs. Keep in mind that typical event calendars do not provide the level of support party hosts need. Unless you have a large programming staff, consider a subscription service such as www.party2win.com or www.partylaunch.com to get your party program up and running immediately.
- 5) OK! Now that you've set your goals, outlined your plan, and set up your web site, you are ready to start recruiting your first hosts.** The first few parties are always the hardest to organize. Make a list of the 50 people most likely to host parties for you. (Don't forget your staff, active volunteers, top donors, and chapter or Meetup leaders.) Call them directly and ask them to set up their party before you start sending out general announcements to your larger list. It will inspire other hosts if they see that other people have already signed up.
- 6) Send “host a party” email invitations to your full list.** Everyone on your list should be invited to host or attend a party. Your main goal is to get as many hosts as possible, so make that the primary message. Be sure to tell people WHY they should host a party, assure them that it will be easy, and include links to your party web site. People worry about the cost of hosting, so be sure to mention that they can plan a simple party with chips and dip or ask guests to bring a dish.

Learn more about house parties at www.party2win.com or email: info@party2win.com.

See how easy it is to launch a house party program for your group — visit www.party2win.com/tour



- 7) **Plan a phone banking night or weekend.** Emails are a good way to get people thinking about house parties, but you will usually need to talk to them before they sign up. You don't need to make all these calls yourself—recruit volunteers to help or ask local leaders to organize phone banking in their area. (Be sure to provide a script that includes answers to commonly asked questions.)
- 8) **Schedule conference calls to train and motivate hosts.** Your hosts will have lots of questions! Use a service like www.freeconference.com to organize a conference call and invite all your hosts to join you. (Many groups plan multiple calls in the weeks before the party—see the sample calendar in this packet for ideas.) Start the call with an overview of your party plans and be sure to include detailed instructions for anything you want the host to do. (Planning a conference call? Make sure hosts know they will need a speakerphone. Mailing DVDs? Tell them when to expect them. The last conference call before the party should walk hosts through exactly what you want them to do at the party.) Allow time for questions and answers.
- 9) **Planning to raise funds? Teach your hosts how to do it.** Most people are nervous about asking for money. Provide ready-to-use invitations, flyers, and emails that encourage people to contribute online when they RSVP. On your training calls and on your web site, be sure to include a sample “ask” that gives hosts an example of how to ask for money at the party. Provide sample signs for the party sign-in table. Send sign-in sheets, donation forms, and other supplies. And, if you are planning a conference call for the day of the party, make sure that your speaker asks for contributions at the end of the call.
- 10) **Make it easy for hosts to invite guests.** Your web site should include ready-to-use invitations, flyers, and emails. You can also allow hosts to make their parties “public” so that members can sign up online. Plan an email campaign to your members to encourage people to sign up for a party in their area. Ask local leaders to send announcements to their mailing lists and to reach out to other friendly groups. See “Hosting a Successful House Party” for more ideas you can share with hosts.
- 11) **Encourage hosts to ask guests to host the next party.** If you get two new hosts from each party, you'll double your house party program!
- 12) **Make sure hosts know what to do after the party.** You'll want them to send you any sign-in sheets and checks collected at the party (or petition signatures or other items related to your action). Make sure they know what you need and urge them to send it out the next day. Send a reminder email—and be sure to include a special thank-you message!



Sample Calendar for a Party Program

Campaigns often aim to have one house party day per month. Non-profit organizations and other groups not on a campaign schedule may wish to do parties every other month or quarterly. Here is a sample timeline for organizers to use as a guide in planning their "Big Day" event.

T – 6 to 8 weeks

The ideal time to begin working on a party event is six to eight weeks before the date of the event. Earlier is fine, but host recruitment, one of the critical elements of a successful event, is often difficult more than two months in advance.

Set your date.

Goals. Set reasonable goals with regard to (1) number of parties and (2) fundraising goal per party.

Mass email. Describe the program, and give a link to your party page on your party site.

Meetups. Is there a Meetup or two that shares the same objective or some of the same objectives as your group? Then plan to attend as many as possible before the Big Day. Send staffers, board members, and other volunteers to Meetups to ask supporters for help organizing or hosting events.

T – 4 to 6 weeks

Make personal contact with 25 to 50 of your best candidates to host parties. When making this list, consider personal friends and family, major donors to your cause, and long-time grassroots supporters. Approach them personally to explain the importance of this program and how their participation could assist in ensuring its success. If they cannot help you, ask whether they know of people who might be interested.

Brief conversations with such people, even if they don't lead to parties, can be of great help to you in gauging the level of support for your cause. Ask such questions as "what has made you a supporter for this cause?" and "what sort of events would you like this grassroots engagement program to sponsor?"

T – 4 weeks

Mass emails. Recruit hosts and volunteer organizers. Remember that using a different "voice" for each mass email will help it from being perceived as "spam." One mass email can come from the candidate or executive director of the group. One can come from a volunteer organizer or staffer. Another can come from a past host. Give brief quotes from

Learn more about house parties at www.party2win.com or email: info@party2win.com.

See how easy it is to launch a house party program for your group — visit www.party2win.com/tour



such people in order to give it a personal touch. And give updates as to your progress in each email, e.g., “We already have ten parties in eight different states! Can you help us hit our goal of 15 parties nationwide by next week?”

Phone bank prospective hosts. Ask others in your organization to identify their list of the 25 or 50 people most likely to host an event. If possible, have regional leaders call people they know. Or, organize a phone bank and headquarters and go through your list of active volunteers or past donors. The more people you call, the more hosts you’ll have.

Kick-Off Conference Call.

T – 3 weeks

Organizational/Training Conference Call.

T – 2 weeks

Mass email. Recruit hosts, invite all to join your Organizational Conference Call.

Organizational/Training Conference Call.

T – 1 week

Mass email. Recruit hosts, start to talk about "find a party near you" for attendees.

Reserve conference call for the Big Day.

Begin daily emails to hosts. Train your hosts with short emails that outline what they can do to prepare. For example, the day before the event you can remind them to email directions and a last-minute reminder to everyone they invited.

Last day to mail to hosts via regular mail. Make materials available online and avoid mailings altogether!

T – 3 to 4 days

Mass email. Recruit attendees.

If planning a conference call:

- **Mandatory planning conference call for all hosts.** Give the dial-in instructions for the Big Day call during this planning call.
- **Talking Points/Briefing Memo** for your featured speaker.

Learn more about house parties at www.party2win.com or email: info@party2win.com.

See how easy it is to launch a house party program for your group — visit www.party2win.com/tour



T – 1 day

If you have pre-selected parties with questions to ask for Q&A, then call them in advance to brief them on the program for the call.

T – 0 day: The Big Day!

Planning a conference call? The moderator or featured speaker should mention some key logistical things:

1. ASK!
2. Send contributions in ASAP.
3. All guests please fill out sign-in forms.
4. All contributions to be accompanied by a signed, completed contribution form.
5. Consider hosting or helping to host for the next event, on [date].



Hosting a Successful House Party

- 1) Decide whether you are planning a large or small house party.** For large parties, be sure to check out the “promoting your party” handout—there are lots of ways to spread the word! For smaller parties, remember that you need to invite about twice as many people as you expect to attend.
- 2) Plan ahead and ask for help.** Opening your home for a party is a terrific way to support a campaign or cause. Don’t feel you need to do everything yourself! You can recruit co-hosts (they can help spread the word, arrive early to set up, and stay late to clean up) or simply plan a potluck and ask each guest to bring a dish. And remember: house parties don’t have to be fancy. People are coming to connect, to be empowered, and to be inspired by the cause. It’s fine to put out a few bowls of chips and dip, or get creative and organize a cookie swap! The key is to keep your party affordable and manageable.
- 3) Spread the word.** For bigger parties, more people means that you’ll build more awareness and/or raise more money. Cast a wide net—invite friends, family, co-workers, sporting buddies, church and union members, neighbors. Then, ask each person to help spread the word by forwarding your email or flyer to friends.
- 4) Make the most of online tools provided.** Your organization should give you a way to send invitations, manage RSVPs, track contributions, and much more. Explore the online tools provided and use them to make your party a success. And don’t worry—sending invitations is as easy as sending an email. (If you don’t have the time or skill to manage the party online, you can always ask a friend or co-host to manage this task.)
- 5) Don’t panic if you don’t get RSVPs right away—and keep publicizing up through the day of the party.** Many house party hosts report that the bulk of their RSVPs come in the last week—and often the last 48 hours. Be sure to send reminders AND make a call to people you really want to come. Parties are personal; people are so overwhelmed by emails that it is easy to forget to RSVP. But when you call and speak with them or leave a message, they are more likely to make your event a priority. (Working with an organization? Consider calling local members and asking them to attend. It’s a great way to meet new people and activate volunteers.) Be sure to send a reminder email the day before to everyone who said yes and anyone you haven’t heard from. Include directions.
- 6) Worried about meeting your fundraising goal?** Many first-time hosts are nervous about asking for money. Remember: everyone who comes to your party is there because they are interested in the candidate or cause. But, that doesn’t mean that they will automatically open their wallets. The most successful parties:

Learn more about house parties at www.party2win.com or email: info@party2win.com.

See how easy it is to launch a house party program for your group — visit www.party2win.com/tour



- ***Make it clear in advance that this is a fundraiser.*** You can ask for a minimum contribution or suggest that people give what they can. But either way, make it clear that the purpose of the party is to raise funds.
 - ***Ask guests to contribute when they RSVP.*** It's easier for you to manage if guests contribute online.
 - ***Have a sign-up table near your front door.*** Ask guests to sign in and also ask them for a contribution. (It's best to ask a co-host or friend to work this table so you are free to manage your party.) You can build excitement about meeting your goal by having a party thermometer that you add to as each guest contributes. And motivate people to dig deeper by posting flyers that show how money will be used. It's also good to post suggested contributions—a sign saying “Our average online donation was over \$100!” will lead more people to write \$100 checks.
 - ***Make two more fundraising appeals during the party.*** People who gave online or at the door may want to up their contribution after they hear a conference call or watch a DVD or learn more about your cause.
 - ***Make a personal “ask.”*** Personal fundraising is the most effective. Just take a few minutes to tell your guests why YOU support this cause or candidate. Talk about what first got you involved, or how their contributions will be used—whatever you feel most passionate about. Don't be shy. Your guests expect you to make an appeal.
 - ***Consider asking a friend or guest speaker to also do an “ask.”*** (And while you're at it, consider inviting local elected officials or leaders in your cause to attend your party.)
- 7) **Work out technical issues before the party.** Watching a DVD? Test the DVD player and watch the DVD yourself. Connecting to a conference call? Set up your speakerphone in advance, test it, and make sure you have all the dial-in information you need. (Don't have a speaker phone? See if you can borrow one from a friend.) Planning to connect your phone to your stereo? Some people do it, but it is tougher than it sounds. Do it early and test it.
- 8) **Encourage party guests to throw the next party.** Most groups are actively looking for hosts for their next event. Ask your guests to volunteer to host the next party. Let them know how easy it was, have information available about the next event, and capture their contact information so that the organization knows they are interested in hosting a party.
- 9) **Send a thank-you after your party.** Thank everyone who attended. And don't hesitate to send a party report to non-attendees asking them to help you meet your goal—or reporting that you met your goal and need help reaching a new goal.
- 10) **Send any paperwork and contributions in the next day.** Don't put this off—if you hosted a fundraiser, your organization needs to get the money as soon as possible.

Learn more about house parties at www.party2win.com or email: info@party2win.com.

See how easy it is to launch a house party program for your group — visit www.party2win.com/tour